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Goss out of intensive care

FORMER Queensland premier Wayne Goss was transferred out of intensive care in Brisbane yesterday, a day after major surgery to remove a brain tumour.

But there was still no word of pathology results, which would indicate whether the tumour was benign or malignant.

Mater Private Hospital executive director

Tracey Burton said Mr Goss was resting comfortably in a specialist ward at the hospital where he remained under close observation.

"The doctors involved in his care are very pleased with his progress and he is exactly where he should be at this stage, having made an excellent recovery from surgery," Mrs Burton said in a statement.



Wayne Goss: pleasing progress.

Mr Goss, 46, was admitted to the hospital on Saturday night and tests showed the likelihood of a brain tumour.

AAP

Secret deal bid to save nurse's life

A SECRET deal is being negotiated in a bid to save the life of a British nurse who is facing the death sentence for the murder of Yvonne Gilford.

The deal is understood to involve the creation of a special ward at a Saudi Arabian or South Australian hospital dedicated to the memory of Ms Gilford, a former South Australian.

Sketchy details emerged yesterday as South Australian lawyers acting for her brother Frank Gilford rejected reports he had waived his right under Saudi law to call for the death penalty.

Pressure on Mr Gilford to declare his position intensified yesterday after it was confirmed British nurse Lucille McLauchlan had been sentenced to 500 lashes in public and eight years imprisonment for her alleged involvement in the murder.

Director of the London-based Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, Helen Bamber, said Ms McLauchlan would suffer excruciating pain and terror if given the lashes.



Frank Gilford: not waiving rights.

The news came as confusion surrounded the fate of the other nurse charged with Ms Gilford's death, Deborah Parry, with confirmation late yesterday that judgment had yet to be passed.

Earlier reports that Ms Parry had been sentenced to death prompted lawyers for Mr Gilford to deny overseas reports he already had decided to spare her life.

As Ms Gilford's next-of-kin, Mr Gilford can call for Ms Parry's execution.

Leading Adelaide barrister Michael Abbott, QC, said last night Mr Gilford had not waived any of his rights and would preserve his position until Ms Parry's fate was known.

Mr Gilford has been under immense pressure since Ms Parry and Ms McLauchlan were charged with the murder of Ms Gilford after the 55-year-old senior theatre nurse was found dead at Dhahran's King Fahd military medical complex in Saudi Arabia on December 11.

Mr Abbott rejected claims by a Saudi-based lawyer for the nurses, Salah al-Hejailan, that a deal resolving the crisis had been finalised after legal action was launched against Mr Gilford in the Supreme Court in Saudi Arabia.

The nurses are suing Mr Gilford for unspecified damages, claiming he has jeopardised their right to life by calling for the death penalty.

Mr al-Hejailan would not reveal details of the alleged deal but claimed it already had been signed by Mr Gilford.

The two British nurses have been held by Saudi authorities since December when they were arrested while allegedly withdrawing money using Ms Gilford's credit card at a shopping centre.

Magpie blinds baby boy

A BABY boy will lose the sight of one eye after he was attacked by a magpie as he lay in his pram.

Wildlife experts yesterday said the incident was one of the "most aggressive" attacks by a bird on a human seen in Australia and warned of further injuries during the magpie season.

The adult male magpie attacked the boy in his pram while he was playing with his three-year-old sister in a park in the Canberra suburb of Kambah on Tuesday.

The bird also scratched the girl.

IN BRIEF

Chief Justice defends investigator

THE New South Wales chief justice yesterday took the unusual step of speaking out publicly against rebel MP Franca Arena's claims that Justice Terence Cole, selected to investigate her paedophile cover-up claims, was a close friend of the man at the centre of the alleged conspiracy, Justice James Wood. She had told State Parliament on Tuesday that Justice Terence Cole frequently played tennis with Justice Wood. Last week she said Justice Wood was involved in a cover-up involving Premier Bob Carr and senior politicians.

Deaths in police custody rising

DEATHS of both Aborigines and others in all forms of police custody have risen to their highest level since reporting started in 1980. A research paper released yesterday shows that 97 people died in custody during 1996-97, of whom 17 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Review of impotency clinics

THE operation of impotency clinics in NSW is to be reviewed after a series of complaints including one by a patient who said he had been left with a bent penis. Health Minister Dr Andrew Refshauge yesterday announced the formation of the committee, which will review standards and operating procedures.

Upper House may split bill on Parliament's future  
Referendum on target

By MICHAEL LESTER and JANE GILLARD

A NOVEMBER 29 referendum on the structure of Parliament is on target after the referendum bill was given in-principle support in a late-night Legislative Council sitting last night.

After a tense debate, President Ray Bailey used his casting vote to break the 9-9 deadlock and send the bill to

a joint-house committee, where it will be considered in detail.

However, Queenborough MLC Jim Wilkinson foreshadowed a plan to split the Government's bill in half, separating the referendum from the detailed plans for the restructuring of Parliament.

The Legislative Council will debate Mr Wilkinson's motion today.

Meanwhile, debate over the future of Tasmania's Par-

liament is raging, with growing concerns about aspects of the Government's legislation.

On Tuesday a group of 10 prominent academics urged the Legislative Council to reject the legislation because of concerns it would dramatically reduce the scope of democracy, unacceptably add to the power of executive government and political power brokers and seriously curtail Parliament's capacity to provide effective oversight and control of executive ac-

tion, debate the very institution of parliament.

Yesterday the Upper House enlisted the support of Queensland Legislative Assembly Speaker Neil Turner, who said the abolition of the Upper House could result in the establishment of an expensive and unaccountable criminal justice commission as in Queensland.

As well, the Legislative Council made public a paper by Tasmania's former chief electoral officer, Colin Ball,

that strongly criticised the bill as "cunning, conniving and the ultimate affront to the principal tenets of representative democracy".

Mr Ball said the referendum questions in the bill prompted a "yes" vote to both questions.

On Mr Ball's advice, Labor raised this issue in the Lower House but the argument was rejected by the Government and the Tasmanian Greens.

Premier Tony Rundle and Opposition Leader Jim Bacon

both were critical of the open letter circulated by the 10 academics.

Mr Rundle said at least one, law lecturer Rick Snell, had in May 1994 proposed reducing MPs, including lowering Legislative Council numbers from 19 to nine.

The whole point of the referendum was to let Tasmanians make a choice between the status quo and reducing MPs to 40 in either a single-house or two-house system.

Team effort makes perfect sense

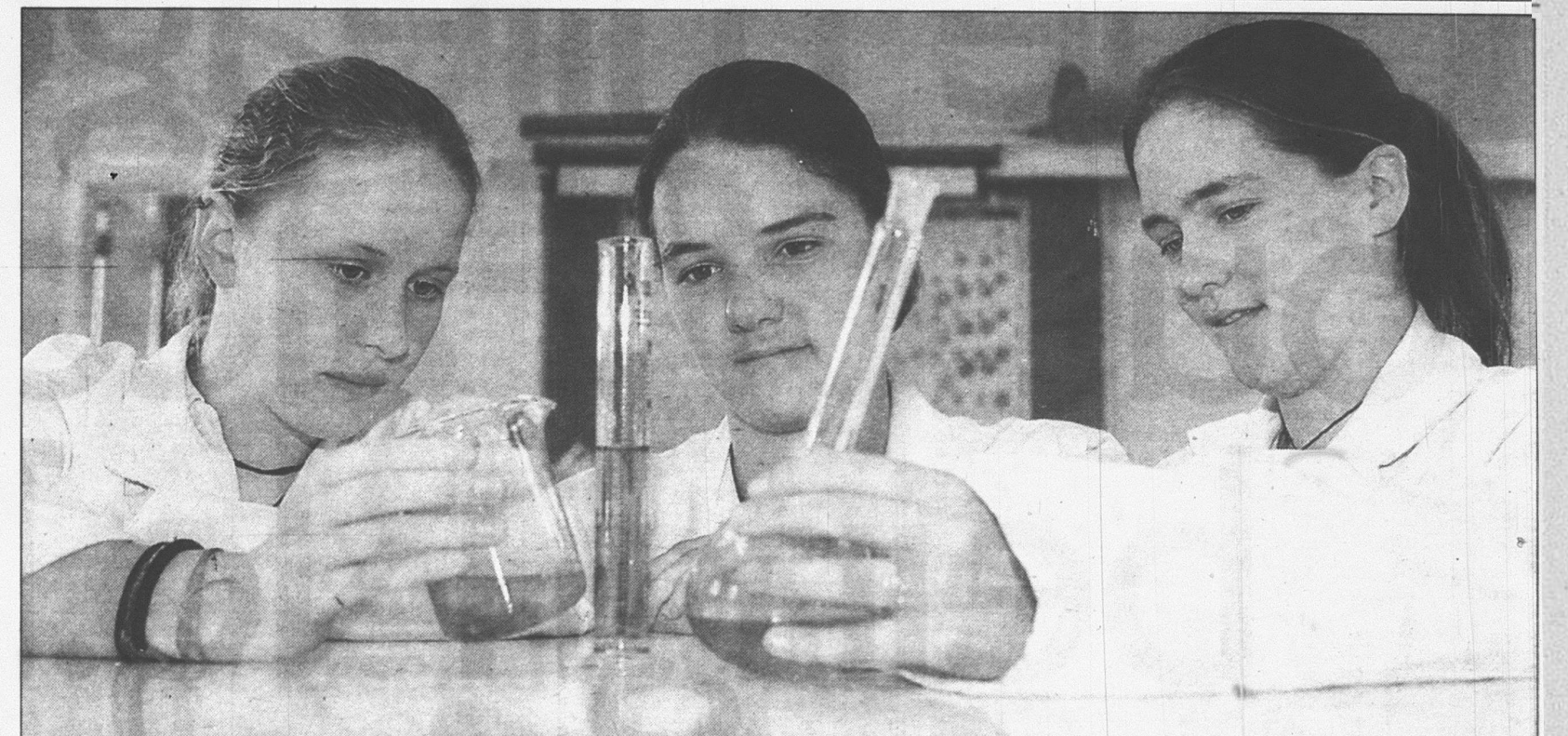
THIS talented all-girl team has snared top honours in the state's 1997 Royal Australian Chemical Institute Schools Titration Competition.

The Year 12 Elizabeth College students — Ruth Whitaker, 17, Chani Grieve, 17, and Emily Caswell, 18 — made chemistry teacher and assistant principal Brien Connor a very proud man by achieving a perfect score.

"It means all the members of the team were spot on," Mr Connor said yesterday.

"To achieve a perfect score is quite rare."

The competition was held in Launceston, Burnie and Hobart on August 16, with results released this week.



Right chemistry: Elizabeth College students, from left, Ruth Whitaker, 17, Chani Grieve, 17, and Emily Caswell, 18. Picture: JAMES KERR

The top four teams in the senior division and the top three in the high school division were all female.

With five teams in the running, Elizabeth College took out first, fourth and fifth

places. Held annually to encourage enjoyment and interest in chemistry, the event attracted 89 teams from 24 high schools and colleges.

Teams were required to analyse three unknown sol-

utions of sodium hydroxide and acetic acid using titration — a routine analytical technique with many applications in research and industry.

Topping the high school

division was St Mary's College, followed by St Michael's Collegiate, Riverside High School and Woodbridge District School.

In the senior secondary division, Elizabeth College

snared first and fourth, with St Michael's Collegiate coming in second and Guilford Young College third.

The winners will compete in the national finals next month.

Tenders for Hydro department

THE Hydro will invite public tenders for the purchase of all Reprographic Services Department assets together with a three-year contract for the provision of statement supply and printing.

Hydro executive director Gary Baker announced yesterday the outsourcing process

would be project-managed by an independent firm. Employees proposing a management buy-out had been assured they would be given a chance to bid for the business.

The Printing Industry Association had been concerned about the prospect of the Hydro selling the printery to

staff below market cost.

In July the State Government told the Hydro it would be inappropriate to sell to staff at less than fair market value.

Project responsibility for the tender process has been allocated to independent commercial adviser KPMG, which will draw on appropriate

advice from the Hydro and other sources.

The arrangements for outsourcing the Reprographics Services Department, whose 20 staff provide a range of graphic design, high-speed laser printing and other services to the Hydro and external clients, has been approved by the Hydro board and notified to the Auditor-General.

Worker admits wage deceit

A FORMER employee of Hobart car dealer Steve Stewart Autos yesterday admitted paying himself more than his entitled wages.

Mark Andrew Spong, 31, of Stirling Ave, Blackmans Bay, pleaded guilty to Corporations Law charges of failing to act honestly.

The Hobart Magistrates Court heard that over two years he took cash from the company without authority and paid himself more wages than he was entitled to, gaining a financial advantage of \$4700.

He also pleaded guilty to 13 counts of falsifying company books in order to conceal his offences.

The charges were laid after an investigation by the Australian Securities Commission. Spong was bailed to appear for sentence on Tuesday.

\$4m salmon hatchery plan

PLANS for a \$4 million salmon hatchery in the upper Derwent Valley could see 10 jobs created in the new year.

Tasmanian salmon producer Tassal Limited hopes to build the hatchery early next year, with a view to expanding its domestic and export markets.

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Thieves assault store employee

TWO men assaulted an employee at a Derwent Park store yesterday before stealing from the premises.

The incident happened at 8.15am at Apollo Batteries in Pearl St. Police said the two men walked into the store, assaulted the 29-year-old employee, took the keys to the cash drawer and removed money.

They were last seen walking in the direction of the Brooker Hwy. The employee was taken to Calvary Hospital by ambulance.

The first robber is described as being 19 to 20

years old, about 175cm tall with dark brown hair. He was wearing a blue japa-style jacket with an emblem on the left front and blue denim jeans.

The second offender is aged about 19 to 20, about 185cm tall, with light-brown to blond hair and a short goatee beard. He was wearing a white T-shirt and blue track-suit trousers with a yellow stripe on the outside of each leg.

Eastern District CIB is investigating, and anyone with information is asked to call Crime Stoppers on 1800 005 555.